Eugenics and the Jew.

INTERVIEW FOR THE *JEWISH CHRONICLE* WITH
SIR FRANCIS GALTON.

The word "eugenics" will for ever be associated with the name of Sir Francis Galton, who has devoted a long life to the pursuance of a high ideal—that of improving the fitness of the human race and to striving to secure that children born into the world shall be well born in the sense that they shall not start life handicapped at the outset by physical defects due to the imperfect health or physique of their pregenitors. It may be said that from the days of Moses Jews have been "eugenists," apart from the hygienic laws enjoined in the Mosaic code, which affect the individual rather than the race. The intense love of children, and the idealisation of home-life have contributed in a notable degree to the production of a race that has withstood greater trials and tribulations than have befallen any other race in history. A representative of the JEWISH CHRONICLE recently visited Sir Francis, who is now in his eighty-ninth year, to seek his views concerning the bearing of eugenics on the Jewish race and the life of the Jewish people.



Photo, Elliott & Fry.

Sir Francis Galton.

The Mosaic Code and Eugenics.

How would you define eugenics? was our representative's first question.

"It is the study," Sir Francis replied, "of the conditions under human control which improve or impair the inborn characteristics of the race."

Do you think that the hygenic regulations of the Mosaic Code have contributed to the fitness of the Jewish race?

"I am willing to believe that their indirect influence has been great."

Are they more responsible, in your opinion, than the vicissitudes which the Jewish people has had to go through?

"Both have played a part in producing the fitness of the Jewish race. The wish of the Jewish woman to be married and have children is an important factor. It is one part of eugenics to encourage the idea of parental responsibility; the other part is to see that the children born are well born. It is a praiseworthy feature of the Jewish religion that, as a religion, it enjoins the multiplication of the human species. But it is still more important to determine that children shall be born from the fit and not the unfit.

The Effect of Environment and Persecution.

Sir Francis advanced the modern and somewhat startling view that environment has little effect on human development, but that nature counted for very much more.

What effect do you think persecution has had on the Jewish race?

"So far as persecution weeds out those who are unfit so far it tends to evolve a race suited to meet hard conditions. We in England have reaped the good effects of persecution in that we have benefitted enormously from the immigration of the Huguenots, who were among the best of their race and who have handed down their qualities to many descendants."

Is it not rather immoral to look with satisfaction to persecution as an aid to race culture?

"It is not immoral but unmoral—it has nothing to do with morals. Persecution does not always produce good results. For instance, the Catholic persecutions in Spain seem to have destroyed the best part of the race, and the Napoleonic wars reduced the stature of Frenchmen to a notable degree. It is the aim of eugenics to supply many means by which the effects of these drastic and not always successful aids to race culture may be produced in a more scientific and kindly way."

Do you think that the constant migrations of the Jewish people have had any effect on their racial culture?

"I cannot speak generally. Each case must be judged on its own merits, and I am not enough of a historian to give any opinion worth having."

Eugenics and Religion.

From an earlier remark of yours I gather that in your view eugenics and religion may go hand-in-hand.

"I think that religious establishments may help forward the eugenic idea just as, in times past, they have thwarted it by celibate institutions."

How can the movement best be assisted?

"The immediate work is to obtain an accurate knowledge of a large number of facts. Such work is being done by the Eugenic Laboratory, and it is very laborious. Institutions may help in keeping careful statistics and discussing them scientifically. It will then remain to popularise the results obtained by experts and to take further steps."

Sir Francis at the Jews' Free School.

Sir Francis recalled a visit which he paid many years ago to the Jews' Free School, where he took a number of composite photographs for the purpose of determining whether it was possible to produce in that way a distinct Jewish type. The results of the experiment were treated in a paper read by Mr. Joseph Jacobs at the Anthropological Institute. In an article in the *Photographic News*, which published the portraits, Sir Francis wrote:—

> They are, I think, the best specimens of composites, I have ever produced . . . I may mention that the individual photographs were taken with hardly any exception, from among Jewish boys in the Jews' Free School, Bell Lane. . . . They were children of poor parents, dirty little fellows individually, but wonderfully beautiful, as I think, in these composites. The feature that struck me the most as I drove through the adjacent Jewish quarter was the cool, scanning gaze of man, woman and child, and this was no less conspicuous among the schoolboys. There was no sign of diffidence in any of their looks, nor of surprise at the unwonted intrusion. I felt, rightly or wrongly, that everyone of them was coolly appraising me at market value, without the slightest interest of any other kind.

The composites are reproduced in the "Jewish Encyclopedia." The paper read by Mr. Jacobs was published in the JEWISH CHRONICLE on February 27th, 1885. Sir Francis presided at the meeting of the Institute of which he was then President.

To our representative he expressed the view that the discussion on that occasion was of a very high order. After a lapse of twenty-five years he re-called the fact that Dr. Adler and Mr. Marcus Adler spoke with great weight at the meeting.

THE LAW SOCIETY.—Mr. W. R. Mortimer Woolf, B.A., LL.B., was among the candidates at the June Examination for admission on the Roll of Solicitors of the Supreme Court who were recommended as entitled to honorary distinction.

"OXFORD AND JUDAISM."

INTERESTING PAPER AND DISCUSSION.

The annual meeting of the West London Synagogue Association was held last week at the house of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Harvey-Samuel, 19, Devonshire Place, the President, Mr. C. G. MONTEFIORE, in the Chair.

The report having been adopted and the Hon. Officers and Committee re-elected, the Rev. MORRIS JOSEPH, in the name of the Association, welcomed Mr. Montefiore on his return from the United States. He said that Mr. Montefiore had gathered a good crop of experiences and impressions from his visit, which, it was to be hoped, he would recount to the Association at an early date.

Mr. LEONARD STEIN, of Balliol College, Oxford, then delivered the following address. He said:—

It is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility, to speak here this evening on the subject that has been proposed to me. But when the invitation came to me from one to whom I owe almost all the little Judaism I can boast, when I was to have the privilege of speaking under the Chairmanship of so distinguished a member of my own University and my own College, it was not for me to hold back. I am conscious that there are many here present who are infinitely better qualified to speak of Oxford and Judaism than I am. It is only very humbly and very tentatively that I, for my part, can venture to discuss them—not, however, without the firm conviction that their discussion is in itself a matter of genuine and immediate interest.

THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF THE OXFORD JEW.

I do not wish to exaggerate. If there is one fault with which Oxford men can rarely be charged, it is that of not taking themselves seriously. And the natural self-importance of the Oxford Hebrew Congregation is accentuated by the generosity with which Visiting Ministers are accustomed to heap upon it the responsibilities of an Atlas. It is encouraged to suppose that the whole burden of the Anglo-Jewish future rests upon its shoulders. Happily alike for ourselves and for the community, we are not nearly as important as that. Our numbers are very small. There are only thirty of us all told. And, again, of those thirty it is quite certain, if experience is any guide, that a large proportion will not, as a matter of fact, play a very important part in the future of Anglo-Jewry. And yet when all reservations have been made, it remains true that the Oxford Hebrew Congregation does occupy a peculiar, an almost unique, position. The fate of *any* thirty souls could hardly be altogether a matter of indifference. But the Oxford Congregation has quite clearly a peculiar importance of its own. It obviously does contain within its ranks some few, at any rate, who are, in the nature of things, certain to play a prominent part in the future. Its members are, almost all of them, at a critical point in their development, at an age which is peculiarly receptive of impressions. Oxford is a place peculiarly fitted to leave impressions of a lasting kind—a place with

A UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE OF IDEALISM

and, again, with a unique capacity for producing what may be called, in a broad and general sense, the spirit of Statesmanship. When these considerations are put together, then, I think, it may fairly be claimed that to some extent, at any rate, the future battles of Anglo-Jewry are at this moment being won or lost in the Oxford Synagogue. If that is even partially true, the fate of the Oxford Congregation at once becomes a matter of first-rate importance to the community at large. The possibilities of Oxford Judaism are very great. How far are they being realised? How far is the Oxford Hebrew Congregation making full use of its opportunities? These are the questions that I would ask the Association to discuss this evening. To answer them it is clearly necessary to recognise in the first place

THE FORCES THAT ARE AT WORK.

No-one can live at Oxford at the present time without realising that he is in the midst of a religious revival of genuine importance. It takes many different forms. It appeals to strangely diverse temperaments. It is distinguished by its catholicity on the one hand, by its practical piety on the other. It is not confined to a clique; it permeates the whole life of the University. Its detailed activities I cannot attempt to describe: its intense reality those who have seen characters transformed by it before their very eyes will hardly venture to question. But the movement, catholic as it is, is not religious in a vague and general sense. The spirit of the place is essentially and characteristically Christian. The city itself is an ancient and historic one; the very stones of its walls speak of memories and traditions other than ours. Within the University the peculiar conditions of College life give convention almost irresistible power. I am not thinking now of the mere practical difficulties of Jewish observance. What I have in mind is the subtle influence of

A PERVADING ATMOSPHERE,

the natural tendency to adopt the mental habits and conventions of the majority, the irresistible power of continuous suggestion. Lastly, the course of study is likely in most cases to imply constant contact with a world of ideas in which the Jewish point of view has no place. The normal attitude tends to become that of one who, steeped in another tradition, looks at Judaism merely from without. I am simply stating these facts as elements in the problem. I am not attacking or defending the position. I am merely attempting to describe it. What, then, is likely to be the joint effect of these forces on the Jewish undergraduate? That will clearly depend for the most part on his antecedents. There is, on the one hand, the man who comes up to Oxford with strong Jewish predispositions. He has been thoroughly immersed in the Jewish tradition; his mind works in Jewish grooves; he is accustomed to move mainly in Jewish society. Such a man is unlikely to play a very prominent part in the life of the University. He does not find its atmosphere very congenial. He lives in a world of his own. His influence is small because his sympathies are exclusive. He remains a Jew, but he hardly becomes in any significant sense an Oxford man. On the other hand,

THE TYPICAL JEWISH UNDERGRADUATE

comes up with a much less adequate Jewish training, but also with much wider social sympathies. He takes part freely in the life of the University. He steeps himself in its spirit. He adopts without any sense of conflict its spiritual conventions and its habits of thought. He has no strong previous convictions to temper the influence of his environment. There is no question of balance or compromise. He surrenders with hardly a struggle to the forces I have attempted to describe. I do not mean that he necessarily abandons his nominal allegiance. I do not even mean that he necessarily ceases to regard himself as an adequate Jew. I do mean that his real hold on the Jewish tradition, his real insight into the Jewish spirit, must insensibly but inevitably decay. And so the religious revival which he cannot help seeing around him leaves him cold. He gives it no material to work upon. His